

The Secret's Out: Newport Harbor's "Trap" is a Thrilling Success!
written by Eli Gunn, a senior at Aliso Niguel High School

A true crime play within a play, *Trap* by Stephen Gregg narrates the investigation of a tragedy at the Oak Box Theater in the seemingly normal town of Menachap, California. When news arises that those present during a show were all mysteriously knocked unconscious but one, investigators are reminded of the tragic history of the same theater - 75 years earlier. Through shocking, unexpected turns, investigators struggle to discover the truth before it's too late.

The mystifying mood is instantly clear as Detective Heche (Sadie Lewis) begins the play taking a seat facing a camera. Resembling a true crime documentary, a projection of her face illuminates a screen behind her while she nervously answers interview questions. She retells her haunting introduction to true fear to the camera, as she anxiously twiddles her thumbs and personifies distress.

As investigators connect the past and present tragedies in the Oak Box Theater, we are transported to 1947. Kaylee Ostler as the lovesick soon-to-be bride Norma Pike embodies parallels between both tragedies. Ostler contrasts her innocent, giggly love for her husband with thunderous, heartbroken cries as she drowns herself on the Oak Box stage after losing him.

Through shaky hands and pacing, Claudio Gonzalez's anxious physicality as Ephrain embodies the character's determination to save the unconscious bodies in the theater before they die. With these traits increasing in severity, Gonzalez mirrors Ephrain's arc from perseverance to a detrimental mania.

In a shocking finale, the cast falls to the floor when hearing whispers of the enticing phrase "Can I tell you a secret?". Ensemble Members Maya Ramirez (Cell Phone Girl) and Sophia Jara (Fallen Girl) blend in with audience members impeccably as they fall victim to the haunting whispers by the inhumane creatures, the pharanochs.

Audio Design (Wesley Kaiser) utilizes dark, thrilling music to emphasize themes of despair and mystery. On occasion, some music made it difficult for actors' lines to be heard properly. However, the audio team smoothly recovers, fading the music as actors project their lines.

Lighting by Omar Babovic creates the show's frightful mood. Flashes of lightning and eerie spotlights illuminate actors as they are tormented by the horrors of pharanochs. Shines of cool tones complement Mia Schiesel's design of consistent green, blue and brown costumes.

With strategic creativity and actors overtaken by horror, Newport Harbor's *Trap* is an unforgettable, fear-inviting performance.